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2002HANOI02694 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01	E-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PER-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SP-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	ECA-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8039
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 002694

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#) [ETMIN](#)

SUBJECT: ETHNIC MINORITIES MINISTER ON LAND, US NGOS

REF: HANOI 2678

1. (U) SUMMARY. THE MINISTER FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES DENIED HAVING SEEN ANY DRAFT BANNING US NGOS FROM THE CENTRAL HIGHLAND, BUT INDIRECTLY ADMITTED THAT THE GVN DID NOT AGREE
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WITH SUCH ACTIVITIES, WHILE WELCOMING US BUSINESSES THERE. HE DESCRIBED ONGOING EFFORTS TO ENSURE HIGHLANDERS HAVE ENOUGH LAND, INCLUDING A NEW PROGRAM AIMED ESPECIALLY AT THOSE WHO HAD EARLIER "SOLD" OR CONTRIBUTED THEIR LAND TO CREATE PLANTATIONS. HE ADMITTED THAT MIGRATION FROM OTHER AREAS OF VIETNAM INTO THE CENTRAL HIGHLAND WAS SEEN AS NECESSARY TO OVERCOME POPULATION PRESSURES AND ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO LAND, WHILE CLAIMING ETHNIC MINORITIES STILL RECEIVED PRIORITY ALLOCATIONS. HE AND AMBASSADOR REVIEWED POSSIBILITIES FOR A VISIT TO THE U.S. BY THE MINISTER AND/OR HIS STAFF IN EARLY 2003. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY POL/C, MET ON NOVEMBER 6 WITH NEW CHAIRMAN OF ETHNIC MINORITIES COMMISSION, KSOR PHUOC. (THIS POSITION WAS EXPLICITLY UPGRADED TO MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DURING THE AUGUST 11TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY INAUGURAL MEETING.) A NATIVE OF GIA LAI PROVINCE AND AN ETHNIC JRAI, HE GREW UP IN NORTHERN VIETNAM (HIS FATHER MOVED TO THE NORTH IN MARCH 1955). HIS EDUCATION WAS IN THE PUBLIC SECURITY SECTOR, IN WHICH HE WORKED MOST OF HIS CAREER, EVENTUALLY RISING TO PUBLIC SECURITY CHIEF FOR GIA LAI, TO WHICH HE HAD RETURNED IN AUGUST 1980. HIS MOST RECENT JOB WAS AS GIA LAI PARTY SECRETARY. HE HAS SERVED AS A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATE FROM GIA LAI FOR ITS 10TH AND 11TH (CURRENT) SESSIONS. COMMENT: WHILE WELL-INFORMED ON ALL ISSUES, INCLUDING THE COMPLICATED LAND ISSUE, KSOR PHUOC STUCK FAITHFULLY TO THE CPV LINE. THAT LINE INCLUDES A POLICY OF POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION THAT IS BOUND TO CONTINUE TO AGGRAVATE ETHNIC TENSIONS. END COMMENT.

US ROLE IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
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3. (U) AMBASSADOR POINTED TO HIS OWN TRAVELS TO ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS INCLUDING THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, QUANG TRI, AND AN UPCOMING TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST HIGHLANDS AS EXAMPLES OF US EFFORTS BETTER TO UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION OF THESE GROUPS AND TO WITNESS GVN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES. HE NOTED THAT USG HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS NOW UNDERWAY ELSEWHERE IN VIETNAM, AS WELL AS PROJECTS BY US NGOS, COULD BE HELPFUL IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS. HE ASKED ABOUT RECENT REPORTS (REF A) OF A RECENT GVN DECREE FORBIDDING US NGOS FROM OPERATING IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS; IF ACCURATE, THIS WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE, GIVEN THE HIGH QUALITY OF THESE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR PROJECTS, AS WELL AS THEIR GENUINELY GOOD INTENTIONS. IT WOULD ALSO INDICATE A DISTRUST OF THE USG AND AMERICAN CITIZENS, WHICH WOULD BE UNHELPFUL AS BOTH GOVERNMENTS STRIVE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

14. (U) KSOR PHUOC INITIALLY CLAIMED THAT "UP UNTIL THIS MINUTE," HE HAD NEVER SEEN ANY DRAFT OF SUCH A DECREE. HE SAID THAT THE GVN WAS READY TO "CREATE FAVORABLE CONDITIONS" FOR US BUSINESSES TO OPERATE IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, WHILE NOT DIRECTLY REFERRING TO NGOS. HE COMMENTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE US AND VIETNAM HAD DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS AND DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING. VIETNAM THEREFORE "DID NOT YET AGREE" WITH HAVING US NGOS IN THESE AREAS. HE CRITICIZED COMMENTS BY CERTAIN AMERICAN INDIVIDUALS -- NOTABLY, THE FORMER US AMBASSADOR IN CAMBODIA.

15. (U) AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT HE AND DAS DALEY HAD MADE CLEAR REPEATEDLY THAT THE USG DOES NOT ENCOURAGE OR SUPPORT
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THE DIVISION OF VIETNAM OR THE INDEPENDENCE OF ANY PART OF IT. HE HIGHLIGHTED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPINIONS FREELY EXPRESSED BY US CITIZENS AND OFFICIAL USG POLICY. HE REITERATED THE USEFUL ROLE THAT US NGOS COULD PLAY IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND URGED THE GVN ALLOW THEM ACCESS.

LAND RIGHTS AND MIGRANTS

16. (U) AMBASSADOR ASKED KSOR PHUOC TO EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM OF LAND USE AND COMPENSATION, WHICH EVEN LOCAL OFFICIALS IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS ADMITTED HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN HANDLED WELL. THE MINISTER SAID THAT LAND IN VIETNAM BELONGED TO "ALL THE PEOPLE," UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE. INDIVIDUALS HAVE ONLY LAND USE RIGHTS, NOT ACTUAL OWNERSHIP. CPV AND GVN POLICY IS THAT FARMERS MUST HAVE ENOUGH LAND TO SURVIVE, AND TO GIVE PRIORITY ON PROVISION OF LAND TO ETHNIC MINORITIES. SINCE 1985, WHEN LAND VALUES BEGAN TO RISE WITH THE ADVENT OF DOI MOI, MANY ETHNIC MINORITIES HAD SOLD THEIR LAND USE RIGHTS TO MIGRANTS TO THESE NEW ECONOMIC ZONES, OR TO CREATE PLANTATIONS, AND MOVED FURTHER INTO THE FORESTS TO CULTIVATE NEW LAND, HE ADDED.

17. (U) THE MINISTER NOTED THAT THE GVN HAD DECIDED TO "SOLVE" THE LAND PROBLEM OVER THE 2002/2003 TIME PERIOD,

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R 061028Z NOV 02
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SIPDIS

ALLOCATING 500 BILLION DONG (USD 33 MILLION) TO A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH EACH HOUSEHOLD WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO EITHER 1/3 OF A HECTARE IN AREAS WHERE TWO CROPS PER YEAR ARE POSSIBLE, OR 1/2 OF A HECTARE IN SINGLE CROP AREAS. IF THEY HAD ALREADY SOLD THEIR LAND, THEY WILL BE ENTITLED TO 4 MILLION
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DONG (USD 270) IN COMPENSATION. THOSE WHO RECEIVE NEW LAND -- WHICH WILL BE TAKEN FROM UNPROFITABLE PLANTATIONS -- WILL BE BARRED FROM SELLING THESE LAND USE RIGHTS FOR TEN YEARS. SELLERS WHO VIOLATE THIS PROVISION WILL LOSE THEIR LAND, AND THE BUYERS WILL LOSE THEIR MONEY, HE CLAIMED.

18. (U) AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT HOW THE GVN HAD FACTORED IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNAL LANDS WHEN IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAM. KSOR PHUOC AGREED THAT THE TRADITION IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS WAS FOR VILLAGES TO ALLOCATE LAND HELD COMMUNALLY BY THE VILLAGE TO FAMILIES, WITHOUT PROVIDING DOCUMENTS. HE SAID THAT THE GVN, WHILE RESPECTING THAT TRADITION, HAD ORIGINALLY ASKED THESE HOUSEHOLDS TO "CONTRIBUTE" THEIR LANDS TO CREATE PLANTATIONS IN THE INTEREST OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OF CHANGING THEIR "NOMADIC" LIFESTYLE. SOME HAD STAYED ON THE PLANTATIONS, OTHERS HAD NOT. THE GVN'S GOAL NOW WAS TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF PRODUCTIVITY OF THESE LANDS, WITH WHICH IT WAS HAVING SOME SUCCESS, HE ADDED.

19. (U) THE MINISTER DESCRIBED HOW THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HAD ONLY 4 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING ON 5 MILLION HECTARES OF LAND, WHEREAS IN OTHER AREAS PEOPLE HAD NO LAND AT ALL. THE GVN HAS TRIED TO DISTRIBUTE THE POPULATION MORE EQUITABLY TO OVERCOME THESE DISPARITIES AND TRY TO PROMOTE MORE EQUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE CLAIMED THAT PRIORITY FOR LAND USE RIGHTS IN THE HIGHLANDS REMAINED FOR THE NATIVE ETHNIC MINORITIES (REITERATING DISTRIBUTION CRITERIA DESCRIBED IN PARA 7). HE PREDICTED ADOPTION OF A NEW GVN DECREE IN NOVEMBER THAT WOULD ADDRESS ASSISTANCE IN ENSURING LAND AND LIVING QUARTERS FOR ALL.

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TRIP TO U.S.

10. (U) AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE MINISTER'S STAFF HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE EMBASSY'S POLITICAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTIONS REGARDING AN EARLY 2003 TRIP BY THE MINISTER TO STUDY US PRACTICES REGARDING MINORITIES AND TO EXCHANGE VIEWS. THE MINISTER DENIED ANY PLANS YET FOR HIM TO MAKE SUCH A TRIP, ADMITTING ONLY THAT HE HAD ASKED HIS STAFF TO "RESEARCH" CONDITIONS IN THE U.S. AND OBTAIN MATERIALS ON US PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP AN "EFFECTIVE AGENDA" FOR SUCH A TRIP. HE AND THE AMBASSADOR AGREED THAT THEIR TWO STAFFS SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK OUT POSSIBLE OPTIONS, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE NOT ONLY MEETINGS WITH USG OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON BUT OTHER SITE VISITS SUCH AS TO INDIAN RESERVATIONS, VIETNAMESE MONTAGNARD CENTERS IN NORTH CAROLINA, AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS IN APPALACHIA. THE MINISTER NOTED THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WAS NOW MULTI-ETHNIC, AND THAT VIETNAM COULD LEARN FROM EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE, INCLUDING THE U.S., FOR WHICH HE EXPRESSED ADMIRATION.

11. (U) THE MINISTER CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT VIETNAM HAD DECIDED TO "FORGET" THE PAST AND CONCENTRATE ON THE FUTURE. HE NONETHELESS WARNED THAT THE US MUST STILL WORK TO "SOLVE" PAST PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE WAR AND THAT, WHEN EMBOFFS TRAVELED, THEY WOULD STILL FIND "MILLIONS" OF PEOPLE WHO STILL THOUGHT ABOUT THE PAST. HE URGED AMBASSADOR AND EMBOFFS TO INTERACT WITH VIETNAMESE "HONESTLY" AND TO BUILD TRUST BY BOTH WORDS AND ACTIONS. AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT US POLICY TOWARD VIETNAM WAS VERY SIMPLE: WE WANT TO BUILD

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GOOD RELATIONS BY HELPING VIETNAM GET RICHER, WHICH IS ALSO IN THE INTEREST OF THE U.S.
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